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**Towards a better understanding of copper  
tolerance mechanisms in the model plant species  
*Arabidopsis thaliana***

Thèse présentée par Hélène Lequeux en vue de l'obtention du grade de  
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# Résumé

Le cuivre (Cu) est un nutriment essentiel à la vie des organismes mais aussi, lorsqu'il est présent en excès, un constituant toxique de la cellule. Pour faire face à des concentrations élevées en Cu dans l'environnement, les plantes ont développé des mécanismes complexes de tolérance au Cu. L'objectif de ce travail est d'apporter une contribution à la compréhension de ces mécanismes en utilisant la plante modèle *Arabidopsis thaliana*. Dans un premier temps, nous avons montré que l'excès de  $\text{Cu}^{2+}$  entraîne une réorganisation de l'architecture du système racinaire caractérisée par une inhibition de la croissance de la racine primaire et l'augmentation de la densité de racines latérales. Nous avons mis en évidence plusieurs processus métaboliques associés à cette réorganisation, tels que des changements dans l'homéostasie minérale, le statut hormonal et la production de lignine. Une approche de génétique classique a ensuite été entreprise afin de mieux comprendre les composants moléculaires impliqués dans cette réponse. Un criblage de mutants a été effectué sur excès de  $\text{Cu}^{2+}$  dans le but d'isoler des mutants présentant un phénotype racinaire altéré par le  $\text{Cu}^{2+}$ . Un mutant sensible au  $\text{Cu}^{2+}$  (appelé *cop29*) a été sélectionné en raison de sa forte inhibition de croissance racinaire sur excès de  $\text{Cu}^{2+}$ . Le clonage positionnel du mutant, combiné avec des approches génomiques, a permis d'identifier le gène *At3g14190* comme étant le gène muté responsable du phénotype de *cop29*. Ce gène encode une protéine de fonction encore inconnue. La caractérisation phénotypique de *cop29* a révélé que le mutant est également sensible à l'excès de  $\text{Zn}^{2+}$ ,  $\text{Mn}^{2+}$  et  $\text{Na}^+$ . De plus, en présence d'un excès de  $\text{Cu}^{2+}$  ou de  $\text{Na}^+$ , le mutant présente des concentrations en  $\text{K}^+$  significativement plus faibles que le type sauvage. La caractérisation du gène/protéine COP29 a débuté et a permis de mettre en avant, grâce à l'utilisation des banques de données génomiques et protéomiques, que la protéine COP29 pourrait jouer un rôle dans la régulation du cycle cellulaire. En accord avec cette hypothèse, un homologue de COP29 a été récemment caractérisé chez le riz et permet de maintenir l'activité méristématique en conditions de stress. Les perspectives consisteront à confirmer un rôle similaire de la protéine COP29 chez *Arabidopsis*.



# Summary

Copper (Cu) is an essential micronutrient for all living organisms but it becomes highly toxic when present in excess. To cope with high levels of Cu supply, plants have evolved tightly regulated tolerance networks. This project aims to contribute to the understanding of Cu tolerance mechanisms by using the model plant species *Arabidopsis thaliana*. First, we showed that Cu<sup>2+</sup> excess is responsible for a reorganization of the root system architecture (RSA) characterized by a primary root growth inhibition and an increase in the lateral root density. Several metabolic processes are associated with this RSA remodeling, including changes in the mineral homeostasis, hormonal status and lignin deposition. A classical genetic approach was then undertaken to tackle the components of this response. In a screen for mutants altered in their response to Cu<sup>2+</sup> excess, one Cu<sup>2+</sup>-sensitive mutant (named *cop29*) was selected because it exhibited a severe root growth inhibition upon Cu<sup>2+</sup> excess. Through a map-based cloning combined with genomic approaches, we identified the *At3g14190* gene as the mutated gene responsible for the *cop29* phenotype. This gene encodes a protein that has never been characterized before. The *cop29* phenotypic characterization revealed that the mutant is also sensitive to Zn<sup>2+</sup>, Mn<sup>2+</sup>, and Na<sup>+</sup> excess. We also noticed significant lower K<sup>+</sup> concentrations in mutant tissues compared to WT upon Cu<sup>2+</sup> or Na<sup>+</sup> excess. We started the characterization of the COP29 gene/protein and underlined, by using genomic and proteomic databases, that the COP29 protein could have a role as a regulator of the cell cycle. In agreement with this hypothesis, a homologue of the COP29 protein has been recently characterized in rice and maintains meristematic activity under stress conditions. Perspectives will involve additional experiments to confirm a similar role of the COP29 protein in *Arabidopsis*.